

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of the application are respectfully requested in view of the remarks herewith, which place the application into condition for allowance. The present remarks are being made to facilitate prosecution of the application.

I. STATUS OF THE CLAIMS AND FORMAL MATTERS

Claims 3-20 are pending. Claims 3, 9, 11, 17, 19 and 20 are independent. It is submitted that these claims, as originally presented, were in full compliance with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §112.

Claims 3-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,675,180 to Yamashita, et al. (hereinafter, merely "Yamashita").

Applicants submit that Yamashita has an effective filing date of June 4, 2001, which is after the priority date of the present application, which is entitled to the benefit, under 35 U.S.C. §119, of Japanese application 2000-215108 filed on July 14, 2000 in Japan. Applicants submit herewith a certified translation of Japanese application 2000-215108.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that Yamashita is not prior art and thus all of the outstanding rejections based upon Yamashita in the outstanding Office Action are overcome.

Furthermore, although Applicants have asserted that Yamashita is not an effective reference against the present application, such assertion is not a representation concerning distinctions and/or similarities between the present application and Yamashita. Applicants reserve the right to traverse any further rejection that may be presented.

Therefore, Applicants submit that claims 3-20 are patentable.

CONCLUSION

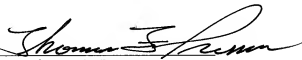
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In view of the foregoing remarks, it is believed that all of the claims in this application are patentable and Applicants respectfully request early passage to issue of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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